

INDEMNITY

Entry No. 51 in Our Prize Story Competition

By KATHERINE G. BUSBEY

A NATIVE in whitish blue cotton pajamas, hands tied behind him, and stumbling under the blows of a policeman's club, passed the Consulate. The policeman, as black as his prey, also wore pajamas; but plus the insignia of authority, — a nose strapped, much dented helmet, gold earrings, a belt, and a large, white, roseally grin.

A haire of early Victorian vintage drawn by a tired horse lazed along the refuse littered boulevard until, one of its back wheels detaching itself as painlessly as a child's first tooth, it came to rest in the exact center of a black pool, and out of it scrambled a blacker ladyship in Parisian frock and boots. She immediately raised a crimson parasol and began picking her way, with the help of stones and other less germane articles lying about, to the roadside, where, from the pretty border of smelly mud, she directed a jargon of selected French invective in a soft, pleasant voice while the driver drove on unmolested.

Paymaster Bascom Lee, U. S. N., standing at a long window in the first floor of the Consulate, felt the disgust that had filled his soul and nostrils ever since stepping upon the quay of this city of the gutters half an hour before, giving way to reluctant humor. It all seemed to belong to a sordid farce acted in front of a sinister backcloth. He was not new to tropical duty on this side of the continent; he had seen others of these settlements centuries old and still no larger than pinheads on the untouched expanse of their background. He had before steamed past picturesque old forts and sunken batteries, ruins overgrown with creepers, and in the background beautiful hills crowned by deserted citadels—only to land and find damp, hot towns, ulcers of insanitation, with a faint of imbecile popularity coming off from the official encounter like a whiff from off some corpse. Nowhere had he stopped long enough to get a more particularized impression; but here, with a revolutionary setting barely pushed to the flies, he was finding opera bouffe. There was a touch of insanity in all this, a sense of lighthearted drollery.

This humor, however, was in passing, and a glance at the gray hull of the gunboat out in the harbor recalled that he belonged to a world of straightforward facts and at present rather disagreeable duties. For Bascom Lee, Southerner, had not found any humor in the situation when he was ordered ashore to complete some negotiations in diplomatic amity with the black ruler of this place.

An element of something like grim anticipation had come into his assignment when, just before taking the launch, he had learned that the Consul General to whom he was to report was one John De Witt Carroll, unmistakably the Jack Carroll, brother of—well, brother of the very red embodiment of that surmised romance with which the women he met were wont to invest the case of Bascom Lee, naval officer, good looking, unmarried, and thirty-two.

"It's the chance I've wanted. I'll make myself ask how she is— if she's married. I've got to know how it is with you. Vera." Lee thought, staring into the street, deserted now except for the seagull back that had brought him from the wharf. Its box seat was deserted; the driver slouched among the crazy shade of the Consulate's bamboo fence with every evidence of mental fatigue.

Lee realized that it was sometime since an incredibly aged negro, bent almost double, a mere bundle of acute angles, had shown him in and taken his card. He turned on his heel impatiently, and there, in the doorway of that bare office, stood Vera Carroll!

SHE had evidently been waiting for him to turn. She was all in white, and her fair hair caught all the remaining light in the room in a glimmer of gold. She looked so exactly as she had when he came to her that time four years ago, just before his court martial, that he thought he must be dreaming.

"Captain Lee, my brother is not at all well; but he wants to see you. Will you be good enough to come up?" She spoke a little breathlessly, yet with control. "I'm sorry to hear that about Jack— or—the Consul General," Lee remarked absently. "But I heard you were in Europe," he voiced his sad thought.

"One hears strange things."

"The certainly does. Why, I've heard that you were to marry an Englishman, a New York banker, and that Count What's His Name in Washington—" Lee's blood was traveling at about seven million miles a minute.

"All at once?" Her smile had a crook at each end; one signified amusement, the other was wistful. Lee remembered that smile. It was one of the tricks of Vera Carroll's brilliant, ever varying countenance.

"How long have you been in this unspeakable hole?" his voice was rough with emotion.

"Two years."

"How many other white women are there in the place?" A naval officer's interrogation is always more or less like a pistol crack.

The girl looked confused. "I think we won't make this a cross examination," she said quietly.

"How many?" pursued Lee doggedly.

"Why, there's a brilliant diplomatic circle—in season." She uttered this astonishing falsehood with childless eyes.

"How many women do you speak to?" Lee probed, but with softer intonation.



"I'm Going to Kill the Little White Man!"

"Well, there was the wife of the British Consul General and—"

Lee waited. He read her face. "And she left as soon as revolution was declared?" he asked.

"Yes."

"And you stayed through?"

"I wanted to be with Jack."

"Of all the pluck!"

"Don't!" To his utter amazement, Lee saw her round chin quiver—that chin, adorable and perfect like some small trout, yet flesh, that he had so often dreamed of holding in the palm of his hand to kiss her. He tossed his cap on a nearby desk.

"What's the matter?" he asked, standing very near.

"Why, nothing." The chin was firmly tilted now.

"Come!" she added imperiously, and led the way. But when they had climbed the stairs she faced him, flushing a little. "Don't insist upon his going to the palace with you, will you? You'll see he can't. He faltered in an imploring whisper that went to Lee's heart. He entered the Consul General's room alone.

JACK CARROLL, the magnificent little being who had lorded it in the theater lobbies and club windows, sat huddled in a deep bamboo chair trembling; the lighted cigar in his hand danced like a firefly in the dim room. He was a sad looking object, every line of his body articulate with dejection and despair; but he was not drunk. Lee was certain of that. As he attempted to pull himself to his feet, it looked like locomotor ataxia or drug; but as Lee grasped the man's hand and felt it ooze away cold and limp, saw his face withering with terrors unseen, he said to himself, "The sun's been too much for you, poor devil!"

"Sorry you're not quite fit, old man," he said aloud.

"I'm all to pieces, Lee. But thank God it's you sent, and not someone who hadn't known me when I was a chap!"

"Had a fever?" asked Lee, to cover the fact that he had to help the shaking figure back into the bamboo chair.

"Oh, yes, I've had a little fever ever since I came; but that's merely the playful paw stroke. It's lying among professional poisoners and assassins, murder, pillage, and other diversions that does for you."

Lee had heard of this sort of tropical havoc with the human mind when its one poor fellow they were taking home on the ship from some individual devastation in the South Sea had said, "the flesh cringes on your bones and your soul goes mad." He had also heard that a shock to the unnerfed system was about the only means to bring one smelly out of this condition, and for a moment he had a vision of himself rising and incontinently punching Carroll's head. He leaped forward.

"Now, look here, Carroll," he began firmly.

"Don't try to bully me into believing I'm seeing things, Lee. It's no go. You're here to collect that indemnity from old Bayer-Cond, aren't you?"

Lee nodded.

"Well, I guess I'm paying my indemnity for past gaiety."

"Oh, nonsense!" Lee forced himself to murmur.

"Yes, I am. I've felt that way all along, and I've stuck it out, though it makes me miserable and sick,

like biting into something rotten all the time. Getting me this appointment was considered the scream of the evening. But I made up my mind I'd make good—just to pay up like a gentleman for the character I'd lost. And I've stuck it out, haven't I?" He spoke with a pitiful bravado in which there was a note of entreaty.

THE room was very still with that heavy, mute spell of a climate where the sinking sun seems to draw off the breath of the land. But after a time a light breeze sprang up, lifeful and refreshing; a few outspaws rustled through the awnings. Then a low, hoarse murmur came up to them, and Lee saw the man before him suddenly turn green with emotion and fright. Before he could speak there arose the metallic drone of what seemed to be a weird incantation, a repetition of one rhythmic line:

"Moué tué re p'tit blanc-he-moué, tué ee p'tit blanc-he!"

The words became distinct, and yet the effect was like a locust.

"Get that? I'm going to kill the little white man!" chattered the Consul General, his body too limp even to tremble. Lee went toward the window.

"Don't let yourself be seen!" hissed Carroll.

Through the venetian blind Lee beheld a wild and gorgeous apparition of a woman over six feet tall, walking with measured steps before the entrance to the Consulate, a knife in one hand and a pistol in the other. She wore a single white garment as plain as an underfla cover, from which her ebony arms and the dusky column of her throat displayed their mighty perfection. There was a crimson splotch on each tawny cheek, and a slight jingle and flash of barbarous ornaments as she walked back and forth chanting her cheering refrain. A knot of followers occasionally urged her on.

Lee turned back into the room.

"Oh, yes, I know the things you want to ask," Carroll flung out petulantly. "She's Roi Petit Choutte, chief of a band of murderers. Last President gave her a commission as General in his army. At present she's a priestess of one of their cannibal cults."

"And what does she want with you, if one might ask— stew?" Lee urged.

"That's right, laugh!" snarled the Consul General. "I laughed at her when I first came here, laughed at her publicly, and she's stalked me ever since, and the police—God save the mark!—won't interfere."

"Rather obvious sort of stalking," observed Lee.

"Oh, this is just to sweat the iron out of me," replied Carroll, shaking his head until the streams ran crookedly down his face.

"Moué tué ee p'tit blanc-he—moué tué ee p'tit blanc-he!" twanged rhythmically below.

"She'll get me yet!" he groaned, covering his eyes.

"Great Scott! of all absurdity!" cried Lee. With another look at Carroll he dashed out of the room, cleared the stairs at a bound, and catapulted to the veranda just as Roi Petit Choutte reached that point in her patrol.

"Moué tué" she broke off sharply with an "ng" sound in her throat. Her mica eyes in their yellow setting swept sleepily over the lines of Lee's exquisite uniform. Lee smiled slightly and made speech in English with gestures.

"Run along, you sassy puss!" he remarked, his gestures indicating that the immensity of the earth, sky, and water might be hers, but from that spot she must move.

With lowered head she uttered what appeared to be a ferocious threat. The crowd murmured, evidently rather anxious for her to kill somebody; then with the weapons limply at her sides she slunk simonally away, her followers at her heels.

LEE found Vera Carroll standing just within the shadow of the doorway. Back in the hall tall candles burned in sconces; their light on a level with her white shoulders, for she wore evening dress,—a trick so filmy and wired that it seemed to Lee as if she had caught a cloud and blanketed it about her. There was, too, an atmosphere of strength and sweetness about her that seemed to bring a mountain breeze into the dead air of the place. The Tropics hadn't given her the wilted, stringy look a struggle with lighthearted climate and cramps usually gave the women—poor souls!

Then he saw her face—it was white as polished marble.

"That was quite foolhardy, Captain Lee," she said coolly.

"Nonsense! A lot of harmless black idiots led by a comic opera amaze!" exclaimed Lee.

"You also put my brother in the light of a ridiculous coward," she continued.

"Why, I never was so sorry for anyone in my life!" protested Lee, and had he searched a storehouse of emotions he could not have found a more unfortunate expression to hurl against her pride.

"He does not want your pity any more than he appreciates your sense of humor just now. Death in grotesque circumstances is none the less death, Captain Lee."

Lee made no attempt to deny this; but kept his eyes on her with the patient, touching, wistful expression of a collie dog. She glanced at him swiftly, and as swiftly glanced away.

"You are going to the palace now, I believe?" she ended.

Lee stuck his right fist into his left palm. It was his

gesture of despair. He knew the character shimmering behind the spiritual loveliness of Vera Carroll's face, and he knew that she would not let him go an inch farther into the situation. It was to him the last magnificent touch to her colossal spirit. He had felt that way when she had put him out of her life because he had not been able to deny the facts of his court martial. The findings of the court had only set him back a few numbers; but she would not relent and, though he felt her love a terrible toll for one not altogether discredited and rescued,—he had defended the honor of a woman who turned out to have no honor,—yet he was glad she was not like other women.

WHEN he was halfway down the steps she came out to the veranda edge, her frock a soft blur in the purple night. "Aren't you taking anyone with you?" she whispered.

"No. I detest a parade; so I cut out the marine guard. McDougall, my clerk, was coming; but he lamed on the way in, and I posted the launch back with him to the doctor. Hope it's nothing serious." Lee was unwontedly talkative. It was Heaven to stand talking to her in the dark!

"So you'll carry the indemnity through this place alone?"

"Me and yonder John," Lee smiled. "Seventy-five hundred in gold won't make a conspicuous cargo, you know."

"And of course the launch is back by now?"

"Be there presently. When I saw what kind of outfit I was going to ride in, I told them that a start when the salute was fired—salute not to be returned; that's part of the indemnity, you know—would be early enough. The launch needed tinkering."

"What's that?" she interrupted, sharply pointing down to the side of the steps.

"Merely a shadow," Lee spoke tolerantly, and went down to kick mockingly at the dark splotch; when slowly it got up before him like a vapor exhaled from the earth, a black shape that disappeared unmarked. But the light from the house had struck its face. It had a red scar across one cheek.

"Why, it's Cesare! He used to look for me," she tried to laugh as if this discovery was a relief; but her laugh was tinged with a kind of dread.

"You poor child!" cried Lee, starting toward her.

But with one of her lightning changes she stood before him merely a beautiful woman innocent of any strong emotion.

"I wanted to know what your movements might be," she said in a bored way. "In case your sense of humor should not prove so effective a weapon next time." But a woman always handles sarcasm with the point toward her own breast, and suddenly Vera Carroll felt herself trembling at her own words.

AT the palace gate ill made, shouldering sentries pulled themselves up from their repose upon two marvelously carved white marble columns, lying quite casually on each side of the gate.

The courtyard was light as day, with huge torches spluttering from the brick wall, and massed in the center

were some two hundred wretches, nearly naked most of them, splay footed, some of them bleeding. They were tied together, and each dozen pairs secured by a long rope, the other end of which was in possession of a member of a gorgeous and brutal looking staff mounted on scrubby little horses. Obviously there had been a human roundup in the interior.

Then what looked to be the last of a papier mâché *Morphistophiles* leaped out of the palace above them and harangued them as "Noble Volunteers." That much Lee understood. It was his introduction to President Boyer-Canal, and closer inspection during their conference did not change the impression.

Boyer-Canal's spirited mustache, his ruddy imperial, the small black mats before his ears, were indeed landscaped with wonderful accuracy which made them appear stuck to a sleek brown mask; but his eyes had an air of sleepy cunning and there was a faint expression of his lips, something stealthy, a smile and yet not a smile.

He was "desolated" that his predecessor should have held up an American liner suspected of bearing arms; but did it not seem of "dreadful injustice" that he, innocent, should pay and not get the earlimer either? "By God!" But Lee would not go into this, and in the end the indemnity was purchased.

For a second Lee thought he saw in the man in French officer's uniform who brought the canvas bag of coins a resemblance to the wealth with a scar on its cheek who had crunched by the Consulate steps; but the next moment he was telling himself not to be an ass, that in this island of perpetual revolution an unscarred countenance would be a rarity.

Boyer-Canal exhibited his Government's seal on the bag as he meticulously presented it.

"American gold," he said, his shifty, blood-shot eyes rolling unpleasantly.

"Now, your Excellency, if you will order the salute?" Lee urged, the desire to leave the oily presence mastering him.

The scarred fellow had remained. Lee could see that he understood English. Suddenly now he prostrated himself before Boyer-Canal, then rising he spoke rapidly, torrentially, in a Creole dialect; but when the man had finished speaking and again prostrated himself, the President kicked at him savagely; then he turned to Lee, his bullet head waddling from side to side, his voice weak and high.

"He says my city is full of insurgents in hiding; that I must on no account fire that salute which is to be not returned; they will say that I have betrayed the land; they will attack the palace, assassinate me, imbecile crowd of an army—they would stand to gape and let the murdering pigs do it—*N'ghe mang chien F—*" he was gibbering like a madman.

Lee gathered the bag together and lifted it. "President Boyer-Canal, I have the honor to wish you goodnight."

He closed the door behind him. Nobody followed.

HE strode out through the gate, the indemnity swinging from his left hand; his right hand in his pocket close to the butt of a revolver.

His old tropical night liner had disappeared; there

was not a conveyance of any kind in sight. "Well, likely the fellows will be back by now—or I can signal," was his careless thought, and with a shrug of his shoulders he swung into a resolute stride.

The door of the American Consulate was closed, and the office was dark now; but he thought he saw something wavering behind the blind. He paused a moment; then he shook his head.

"If I could only do something!" he said to himself dispiritedly, the wrath and contempt of his experience in the tawdry wooden palace all lost in a painful longing to protect the woman he loved. He forgot himself and his mission. Even the occasional jolt of a rotten plank in the rudimentary sidewalk did not break his absorption. The moon had risen and spread over everything a thin layer of silver, mud and fetid pools showed iridescent tints. But Lee walked with unseeing eyes.

SUDDENLY he became aware that he had been hearing for sometime the beat of a drum, regular and muffled, like the beating of a heart; in fact, he seemed to have confounded it with the beating of his own heart.

Just ahead where the squalid side streets merged into the Champs Élysée, and where he knew he must branch off into the narrow detile between warehouses to reach the docks lay a green circle of gaudy palms, and around this he could see black figures moving like ants.

As in all moments of tension his eye took in the picture with extraordinary vividness. Before the dark green foliage of perfectly shaped palms the stately figure of Roi Petit Chantte swayed rhythmically, immoderate necklaces of glass beads on her dusky neck, lizard things, which hung about her and glittered and trembled with every flexing of her tenuous body. The tynon wapt low down on her forehead looked like a crimson helmet. Two men nearly naked and with matted hair squatted at her feet beating with their knuckles on rough instruments; while all about moved the swaying, changing groups singing their low, monotonous chant which sometimes rose in a high, prolonged, minor note. They seemed almost delicious in their fervor. He had felt how little energy remained in these people, looked at them as harmless fools; but now it was borne in upon him that those black demons, lashed with excitement, had bone, muscle, a wild vitality, an intense energy of movement, that was as natural, as deadly, as the surf along their coast.

He tried to press by, but found himself enmeshed in the outskirts; and then slowly, through a pathway made in the chanting crowd before her, Roi Chantte came swaying toward him, her bare, bronze arms crossed on her breast. When nearer she gave him a look of swift and indifferent placidity, a quick glance of unconcerned wisdom; yet she seemed to know all about him and what would ultimately happen to him. She seemed uncanny, ominous, fateful.

But Lee would not give way to that very feeling. "In the Tropics one must before everything keep calm," he found himself quoting, and he grinned impudently at the advancing priestess.

Suddenly she opened her arms, throwing them up rigid above her head—

"Take care, she is going to stab you!"

BLESSED English words! Lee started aside, half turned, and found Jack Carroll standing beside him, armed, and stiff as a reed; but as he turned the canvas bag all at once lightened and on the ground poured the mass of yellow coin. He had a swift vision of a scarred face at close range on that side; but whether the fellow had used the confusion to put his knife around the bag, Lee never knew—the bottom had dropped out completely. Instantly he was down on his knees running his hands through the soft layer of dust cushioning the roadside, scooping up the coins and dropping them helter-skelter into his immaculate white service cap. A moment later another pair of hands came down into the dust beside his own and fumbled for the coins. Lee started to strike out in their direction, when he drew back dumbfounded—they were white, small hands. They were dropping the coins into his cap! He followed the line of arm up to the figure, and there, closely wrapped in a long black domino, her face veiled, was Vera Carroll kneeling close at his side.

"Quick, don't stop!" she whispered, and automatically Lee's fingers fell again to sieving the dust. They were almost through, and he ventured a look upward. He had never seen anything firmer than the Consul General's back, anything stouter than the hand that leveled a six-shooter at that subdued mole. Roi Chantte stood heavily like a bit of inorganic nature.

Away off in the distance a weird, piercing cry arose, seeming to shape itself without human lips in the heavy night air.

Lee sprang up, trying to raise Vera Carroll; but she came very deliberately and leaning over emptied her hands into the cap he pressed against his left side. In an ecstasy that wiped out all sense of danger he felt her against him.

"I saw you pass! Someone was crawling after you!" she breathed.

And all that time that wild cry was coming nearer, the mingling of many voices now. Then down one of the crooked byways torches flashed, and there swept out a running mass of screaming, yelling, shrieking humanity. It was as fantastic as any dream of the Inferno. Vera's small head darted forward and she said something in her brother's ear. He nodded without turning, and then, to the amazement of Lee, who would have drawn her away until the human torrent passed, she seized his arm and pushed him into their midst, running lightly by his side.

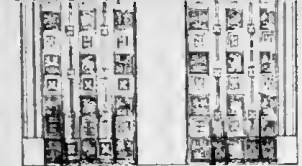
Lee saw that the other runners were tearing their hair

Continued on page 10



Lee Gave One Curious Glance In at the Window, then Drew Back. "Don't Look!" He Entreated.

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CARELESS RILEY BUYS THE SUPPER

Continued from page 4

her hair matches her freckles. Her name's a plain, home cooked article like Matty Kennedy. She's a private character, Matty is. Whenever I see her somethin' deep down in my soul says, 'Own yer own home!' If I came at Matty with a string of sparkles she'd asked me where I fished 'em and make me take 'em back.

"You're not hesitating between these two women, are you?" asked Hubert.

"I was—till I talked with you," confessed the crook. "You see, some very important business is callin' me out o' town tonight. The 14th-st. queen would be with me till the money played out; but the biscuit shooter'd require a marriage-license and the consent of her mother."

"Ask the biscuit shooter," said Hubert earnestly. "It may be inconvenient, it's always inconvenient, to be decent; but ask her—before you go."

"I know a place Out West, 'way beyond Pennsylvania, where a guy can take up a farm without bein' bothered by Society. She could meet me there and we could get a Gospel referee to start the mill."

"You'd never regret it, Fitzpatrick," said the millionaire. "You and your wife would benefit by the freer, more wholesome surroundings—"

"Yes, I would!" said Riley.

Hubert stirred in his chair and glanced at his watch. Riley appraised the jeweled case with professional eye. It was a quarter to twelve. The burglar rose hastily. There was a westbound train at half-past one, and new pastures were calling him. Carefully he extracted a ten-dollar bill from the jumble of swag in his pocket. He called the waiter and paid his score as Hubert adjusted his fur coat.

"Time's pretty valuable with me," said Riley; "but I don't grudge the hour we've spent here chewin' the tapestry. You've blown me to some good advice on two or three things, Cap'n, and I want to hand you back the change. Drop the Happy Poverty rag when you're talkin' to the bums in this

section. Or if you want the Down and Out Club to agree with you, slip 'em ten dollars apiece first, then say anything you want to. Great wealth may be sinful and demoralizin' like you say; but I bet the roll in my inside pocket that if Whisky Charlie was raised in an Elysian-curved mansion like I just told you about he'd get some higher amusement out of his booze than goin' to sleep back of Dan's Place with his head in a coal scuttle."

The rickety cab was waiting outside. "I hope we've done something toward strengthening the bond of sympathy between our Classes," said the millionaire, smiling, as he held out his hand.

"I kind o' feel there's lots o' things that you and me share together," said the burglar, pressing the clean hand cautiously.

"And there's one thing, Fitzpatrick," said Hubert. "Have you got that string of pearls you thought of giving that actress?"

"Yes, Boss, I still got it," admitted Riley nervously.

"Keep two or three of the pearls and have a modest brooch made for the Other Girl," said Hubert. "Sell the rest and put the money into developing your little farm."

HUBERT leaned from the cab and directed the driver to a well known number on Park-ave. The iron jaw of Careless Riley dropped suddenly as he watched the retreating vehicle.

"Say, Cull," he said at last, tossing a quarter to a loafer who had been standing near, "what address did that swell say to the driver?"

The loafer repeated a well known number on Park-ave.

"Well, Careless," soliloquized the crook as he started off at a brisk pace, "it's me to 'phone the happy word to Matty Kennedy,—God bless 'er!—then to pull my freight to Parkway Junction. And, say, when that Hubert boy gets home and finds it's his house I've been burglarizin', I bet he lets out a roar that makes the elevated railroad sound like a madden's prayer!"

INDEMNITY

Continued from page 7

and beating their flat breasts in a frenzy whose blindness protected him and the woman at his side. Unconsciously they held hands as they ran.

"Drop behind!" at length she whispered hesitatingly.

They were before a house streaming light from every hole and crack of its one-story dimness. The mob swept over the porch with awful din. But they were left behind unnoticed. They drew up against the corner of the shanty, panting. Lee gave one curious glance in at the window nearest, then drew back, a shudder running through his frame.

"Don't look!" he entreated.

"I know, it's a wack. They have 'it' sitting in a chair looking on, don't they?" she answered wearily.

"The room is papered with 'Illustrated London News' and pictures of saints," he tried to speak facetiously, "and we arrived with the hired mourners—"

"Come!" she urged. "No one has followed us."

"What about Jack? I shouldn't have left him out there," Lee accused himself.

"Oh, you needn't worry about Jack now," she said proudly. "The word of your danger was like an elixir. It was wonderful!"

"I noticed—"

"He's gone to get the men from the launch as an escort."

They were silent. A memory of the old intimacy with all its shyness came between them.

They made several turns in the noisome narrow streets, passing here and there black figures moving listlessly about, and came quite suddenly upon the Consulate. The bony old servant was at the door.

LEE dropped the indemnity on the table and turned to look at Vera Carroll.

She was starting the lights, her black envelop thrown aside. The cloud dress clung to her slight figure in crushed folds like a closing mourning glory; swirls of the torn fabric followed her in dejected little eddies. Her hair had sagged from its glorious heights to childish disorder.

She drew out a chair for him, unlocked a cabinet, took out a decanter. "I'm afraid there isn't any ice," she said, with her whimsical smile.

Her voice on the deathlike stillness

brought Lee from his thoughts. He reached out and took her by the shoulders, making her look at him.

"I'm not going to say anything about what I owe you and Jack—for tonight—"

"Why, it brought Jack back to himself! We owe you that, you see," she interrupted nervously, but his hands remained.

"No; but you do owe me your faith and trust, Vera," he went on firmly. "For four years—since—well, since you turned my life out of its old course, I've been trying to make myself worth it. I never was worthy of your love—I never could ask for that again,—but I meant to live clean and straight to feel good enough to help you—if you ever needed me. And now is my time to demand. You've got to let me take you out of here! You owe it to me, Girl!" But she was gone.

Lee looked ruefully at his empty hands still outstretched. A faint whirl sounded on the stairs.

"My God! I believe I shook her!" he groaned. "Now I have done it—brute!"

He wanted to strike out into the night and knock his head against something hard. But automatically he fell to counting the indemnity, sticking it in front of him methodically,—twenties—tens—fives—and even miserable two and a halves. It was all there. He thought of how Vera had pressed against him, putting in those last coins.

Then, with drawn face supported between his hands, he sat there grimly reviewing the quick horror of this night. At last the tender thoughts he had so resolutely shut out returned with an invading rush.

"She's safe and sound, thank God! But she risked her life," his thoughts paused, "for me!" He covered his eyes as if that could shut away the hope he felt he could not honestly take.

Dull, regular vibrations of marching feet reached the Consulate, and he sprang to his feet and started forward—and once again he found Vera Carroll waiting there. She was in the white frock, just as before; but now—

Her hands fluttered in a gesture of offering something, of giving, of surrender.

Speechless, the man went to her, bent down, and folded her round. Not with words, not even with meeting eyes, did they pledge themselves in this new hour. Presently he moved and let himself kiss her with

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spirit. Three men struck out, and the Nettle Rashes won the pennant.

"Say, Shorty," said Zeke Bender as the victorians team left the park that night, "didn't I tell you that I saw a flash of light when I struck out two weeks ago?"

WHAT THIS EARTH AMOUNTS TO

SOMETIMES this old world seems a rather large place, and occasionally one gets the idea that there are a great many people; but, after all, there are only fifty-six million square miles of land on which we may build houses and grow crops and walk about, and there are only fifteen hundred million persons to do these things. If the earth's population was evenly apportioned to the various continents and islands, there would be twenty-seven persons on each square mile; but, as it is, there are 101.2 persons to each square mile in Europe, 9.1 persons on a like area in Asia, 14.3 in North America, and only 1.5 in Australasia. The polar regions are the really lonely lands, however; for there the population is only six-hundredths of a person to the square mile. The total population of the earth at the time of the death of Emperor Augustus was not over fifty-four millions, about three-fifths the present population of the United States, and the total population of Europe did not exceed fifty millions before the nineteenth century.


The greatest depth of the Pacific Ocean is supposed to be nearly six miles, and that of the Atlantic four and one-half miles.

The peoples of the world, after much contention, have divided themselves into some fifty principal political divisions.

The average duration of a human life is about thirty-three years. One-quarter of the people on the earth die before reaching the age of six, one-half before sixteen, and only one person out of each hundred born lives to be sixty-five. It is calculated that every minute there are sixty-seven deaths, ninety-six thousand a day, or thirty-five million a year. Births take place at the rate of seventy a minute, one hundred thousand a day, or thirty-six million each year.

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